



IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 15, 2004

Contact: Karen Hershey
(609) 984-1795

CLEAN AIR COUNCIL REPORT BACKS GOVERNOR'S CALL FOR ACTION ON DIESEL POLLUTION

(04/84) TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that the Clean Air Council has issued a report endorsing the Governor's initiative to reduce fine particulate emissions from diesel engines and other sources. The report indicates that the health risks from particulate matter, otherwise known as soot, are greater than first thought.

"We can no longer afford to disregard the health impacts from the 250,000 diesel engines in this state," said DEP Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell. "Under Governor McGreevey's leadership, the Department is making strides in reducing air pollution from stationary and mobile sources by proposing tougher mercury emissions standards, reducing pollution coming from out-of-state powerplants as well as developing initiatives to address diesel emissions."

The Clean Air Council report states that only smoking and obesity outrank particulate matter in the estimated number of premature deaths caused every year. Asthma and emphysema are exacerbated by particulate matter in the atmosphere. Diesel-powered engines, such as those found in trucks and buses, are responsible for a significant amount of the particulate pollution in New Jersey, especially in areas of high traffic and population.

"When we looked at the statistics, the Council was alarmed by the human health impacts diesel emissions are having on our citizens," said Jorge Berkowitz, Ph.D., Chair of the Council. "Clearly, controlling diesel particles will benefit all residents, particularly those who reside in highly trafficked portions of our State."

Among the many recommendations offered by the Council, the report urges the State to require the use of low-sulfur fuel for diesel-powered equipment and the retrofitting of existing diesel engines with particulate controls. The Council also recommends that the state launch an anti-idling campaign for buses and diesel-powered vehicles. Greater enforcement of idling regulations was encouraged and the Council advised that local police should be involved in controlling unnecessary idling.

The Council also called for further research into particulate matter and its health effects and the continued exploration of alternative fuels.

"There are more premature deaths from particulate pollution than there are homicides or traffic fatalities in the state," said Commissioner Campbell.

Consistent with the recommendations of the Council, the Department is implementing outreach, education and enforcement initiatives to address idling vehicles and working with several companies to retrofit diesel equipment. DEP also supports the goals and purposes of Senate Bill No. 1759 sponsored by Senator Bob Smith and Assembly Bill No. 3182 by Assemblyman John McKeon, which addresses diesel retrofits and fuels for on-road and off-road vehicles.

DEP's diesel initiative is one element of Governor McGreevey's goal of reducing air pollution by at least 20 percent over the next 10 years.

The Clean Air Council, created in 1954, is comprised of representatives from public, private and non-profit groups who serve in an advisory capacity to the DEP regarding air matters.

To view the Council's report, visit DEP's website at:

www.state.nj.us/dep/cleanair

###